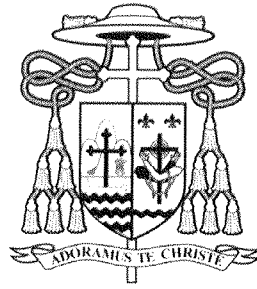


WILLIAM PATRICK

By the Grace of God and



the Favor of the Apostolic See

BISHOP OF LA CROSSE

DECREE APPROVING THE FRANCISCAN CONGREGATION OF DIVINE MERCY AS A
PRIVATE ASSOCIATION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITHFUL WITH THE INTENT OF
BECOMING A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE

Sister Mary Veronica Fitch, Founder of the *de facto* association known as the *Franciscan Congregation of Divine Mercy*, has petitioned so that the Association can be canonically approved as a Private Association of the Christian faithful in the Diocese of La Crosse.

Having carefully considered the petition and examining the statutes; and

Having determined that this Association would be useful to the Clergy, Religious, and Lay faithful of the Diocese of La Crosse; and

Having been assured that this Association has the means and resources to achieve its designated purposes; and to provide suitably for the care of souls;

I, the undersigned Bishop of La Crosse, do hereby, by this Decree, accept and approve the Statutes of the *Franciscan Congregation of Divine Mercy* and herewith canonically approve the *Franciscan Congregation of Divine Mercy* as a Private Association of the Christian faithful in the Diocese of La Crosse for the spiritual and pastoral needs of the People of God and for the purpose defined in its Statutes.

The *Franciscan Congregation of Divine Mercy* has been established with the intention that it will be erected in the future as an institute of consecrated life of diocesan rite. Its members will consist of celibate women who can live as if they are religious, until the Association is established as a religious institute. They are permitted to own a novitiate, a motherhouse and other temporal goods, to wear a specific religious habit, to have its own government, chapters, superiors, councils, to pronounce private vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, and to have temporary and perpetually professed members.

The Association, however, is subject to the oversight authority of the Ordinary, who is to exercise vigilance so that:

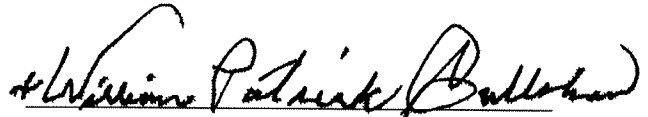
- i. The goods of the association are used for its proper purposes.
- ii. The integrity of faith and morals is preserved in the association.

- iii. Abuse does not creep into ecclesiastical discipline.
- iv. Dissipation of the energies of the association is avoided.
- v. The exercise of the apostolate of the association is ordered to the common good.
(cc. 305 §1 and 323 §2).

By virtue of canon 397 §1, I reserve to myself and my successors the right of ordinary episcopal visitation to ensure that its spiritual and material matters are directed according to the norm of law and its statutes.

The approved statutes of the Association cannot be changed or amended without the approval of the competent ecclesiastical authority.

Given at La Crosse on the twenty-fifth day of December in the year of Our Lord 2020, the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord.


Bishop of La Crosse

S E A L

Very Rev William A. Rhein
Chancellor